



NASA Procedural Requirements

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Subject: Training and Development for the NASA Legal Staff

Responsible Office: Office of the General Counsel

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Chapter 3. Mid Career Professional Development

3.1 Career Focus Areas

3.1.1 Attorneys at the mid-career level (Senior GS-14 or GS-15) who have consistently performed in an outstanding manner should be provided further professional developmental opportunities. Two distinct career focus areas have been identified; the Senior Legal Specialist Focus and the Leadership Focus.

3.1.2 These focus areas are not mutually exclusive; an attorney might begin in one focus area and switch or be switched to another focus area later in his or her career. Placement in either one of these focus areas is for the benefit of the Agency to ensure that the appropriate legal disciplines are covered and that a pool of potential candidates exists to fulfill future leadership vacancies. Inclusion in either one of these focus areas does not assure that an attorney will progress into a designated Senior Legal (SL) Specialist or be selected for a leadership position in the Senior Executive Service (SES).

3.1.3 Although an individual may not progress to a formal leadership position, participation in these focus areas will benefit the individual and the legal team by creating a cadre of trained leaders and specialists. The NASA Legal Leadership Team (General Counsel, Deputy General Counsels, Associate General Counsels and Chief Counsels) will meet annually to identify candidates for the Leadership Focus and for the Senior Specialist Focus. The final determination for inclusion or retention in either of these focus areas will be made by the General Counsel. In the same time period with the identification of new candidates will be a revalidation of previously identified candidates.

3.1.4 These two focus areas are not intended to be a substitute for any Agency wide developmental programs. The purpose of these two focus areas is to concentrate on the unique circumstances of the legal function.

3.2. Leadership Focus

3.2.1 The Leadership focus area is designed to identify and develop potential future leaders of the NASA Legal Team.

3.2.2 On an annual basis the Leadership Team will meet and identify candidates for inclusion in this group.

3.2.3 Upon initial designation of placement into the Leadership focus area a gap analysis will be made of the individual. This will be a joint effort of the individual, their mentor and their supervisor. The purpose of this analysis is to identify areas of growth needed as well as discreet requirements that may be a prerequisite for assuming a leadership position. For example, if a specific rotational assignment or supervisory experience is identified the individual will be targeted to fulfill these requirements. Additionally, if there is mandatory training required this will be identified and targeted. If the individual's legal experience needs to be broadened, opportunities will be provided to accomplish this.

3.2.4 Priority will be provided to those individuals nominated for Agency-wide programs such as the Senior Executive Service Career Development Program, the Leadership Development Program as well as Fellowships.

3.2.5 In order to be a leader within the legal community it is essential to gain a broad perspective. This includes

expanded areas of legal practice, supervisory opportunities, and budgeting duties. Consequently, the Leadership focus will entail a rotational assignment of a minimum of one year. For field attorneys it is highly encouraged that a Headquarters assignment be accomplished. For Headquarters attorneys it is highly encouraged that a field assignment be accomplished.

3.2.6 At least once annually individuals identified in the Leadership focus area will meet as a group for the purpose of facilitated teambuilding and receiving orientation from the General Counsel, Deputy General Counsels as well as other members of the Leadership Team. Typically members of this group will be provided a leadership challenge facing the legal community to address as team.

3.2.7 Members of the Leadership focus area will be provided opportunities to serve in Acting leadership positions as they arise.

3.2.8 Members of the Leadership focus area will be assigned a mentor from the current Leadership Team. To the maximum extent practicable this mentor will not be in the supervisory chain of the individual.

3.2.9 Selected members of the Leadership focus area will on an ad hoc basis attend the NASA Leadership Team Offsites. The purpose of this attendance is to gain their insight and expose them to issues confronting the NASA legal team.

3.3 Senior Legal Specialist Focus

3.3.1 Recognizing: (1) that with the increased complexity and rapid changes of the law a need exists to have Senior Legal discipline specialists (SL) positions within the Agency; and (2) many NASA attorneys desire to progress, but do not want to pursue managerial leadership positions, the purpose of the Senior Legal Specialist Focus will identify candidates who aspire to become a legal discipline specialist and will provide professional development for the purpose of further developing the attorney's technical skills consistent with the needs of the legal function. It is fully anticipated that if an individual is designated as a Senior Legal Specialist they will be available for Agency wide assignments regardless of where they are physically located.

3.3.2 On an annual basis the NASA Legal Leadership Team will assess the expertise needs of the areas of practice. This assessment will encompass needs based on legal issues anticipated to confront the Agency in the future balanced against current staffing and anticipated attrition. Against these needs attorneys will be considered for further specialized development.

3.3.3 Specialized legal discipline training will be pursued and documented by individuals in the Senior Legal Specialist focus area.

3.3.4 Individuals in the Senior Specialist focus area will be provided targeted high profile assignments of Agency wide significance such as lead counsel for a major lawsuit, source evaluation board, mishap investigation board, and etc.

3.3.5 In order to be a Senior Legal Specialist within the Agency it is essential to gain a broad perspective. Consequently, the Senior Legal Specialist focus area will entail a rotational assignment of a minimum of one year. For field attorneys it is highly encouraged that a Headquarters assignment will be accomplished. For Headquarters attorneys it is highly recommended that a field assignment will be accomplished.

3.3.6 Consistent with the needs of the Agency and with available resources, an opportunity for NASA lawyers to pursue a Masters of Law (LLM) is established. On an annual basis the NASA Legal Leadership Team will assess whether there is a need for a particular discipline. Upon determination of such a need, a call for candidates will be made. A selection panel comprised of a Deputy General Counsel, an Associate General Counsel and a Chief Counsel will select the candidate(s) for the LLM program. Funds for tuition, books and supplies will be provided by the Office of General Counsel. Travel and per diem will be provided by the office where the selectee is assigned. It should be noted that this program will comply with NPR 3410.2E graduate program policies.

3.3.7 Senior Level Positions have been identified within the legal function. These positions are not tied to any legal discipline. However, it is anticipated that these positions will be utilized to staff Senior level positions in such areas as intellectual property, ethics, litigation, environmental, and other key legal discipline areas as required.

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